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CIA, Mafia Dealing Noted

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The FBI alerted then-Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy in May, 1961, that the Central Intelligence Agency was involved in backstage dealings with the Mafia, according to informed sources.

The warning was set down in a secret memo from FBI THEN-Director J. Edgar Hoover and, the sources said, reflected information gleaned from the FBI's surveillance of Chicago racketeer Sam Giancana.

The document is now in the hands of the Rockefeller commission and the intelligence Senate committee, which have been investigating evidence of the CIA's recruitment of Mafia figures in a scheme to assassinate Cuban Premier Fidel Castro.

A source close to the Rockefeller commission said it is clear by now that there were not only repeated high-level discussions of Castro's assassination during both the Eisenhower and Kennedy administrations, "but there's also evidence of overt acts—overt covert acts, I guess you'd call them" to kill the Cuban premier.

The source refused to be specific, but he said the commission's investigation does not support the notion of a "secret police operation that went away on its own without White House approval. There is increasing evidence that what the CIA did in the field was known to some of the highest officials of the government."

Administrations of both parties, this source added, deserve "some of the blame," although the record remains "muddy" on the chain of responsibility for various specific attempts on Castro's life, he said.

"There were indigenous (Cuban) organizations trying to do him in" at the same time, the source said.

Hoover's concern about CIA dealings with the Mafia, other sources said, was sparked by the 1960 surveillance of comedian Dan Rowan in Las Vegas, apparently arranged by the CIA as a favor to Giancana.

The head of a Miami private detective agency involved in the surveillance, Edward L. DuBois III of Investigators, Inc., confirmed that it was arranged by Robert A. Maheu, a former FBI agent and then a consultant to billionaire Howard R. Hughes.

Maheu has refused to comment on reports that he was acting at the behest of the CIA. Giancana was reportedly

upset over Rowan's friendship with singer Phyllis McGuire, whom the Mafia boss frequently escorted, and one of the detectives involved in the surveillance, Arthur J. Balletti, has said he was told to watch for the singer while keeping track of Rowan.

In addition, other sources confirmed that Maheu, who once ran his own detective agency in Washington, recruited Mafia figure Johnny Roselli to work for the CIA against Castro. Roselli was reportedly Giancana's right-hand man on the West Coast.

Hoover was apparently unaware of any plot to assassinate Castro, sources said, but wrote his memo to Kennedy because he feared that any CIA-Mafia deals could compromise government investigations and prosecutions of organized crime cases.

Kennedy wrote on the memo that he wanted Hoover's report "followed up vigorously," and eventually was briefed by top CIA officials

on what Roselli and Giancana had done for the agency.

"We told him [Kennedy] in as much detail as we had at the time," one former CIA official recalled, but "my general recollection is that nothing was done outside the country."

Other sources have suggested this may have been true of the CIA-Mafia scheme, but emphasized that it was not the only plot devised against Castro in the 1959-63 period.

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